Wright-Patterson Air Force base in Dayton, Ohio, spent two years sifting almost 400 cases. Their conclusion, made public last December, was that all of them could be accounted for in one of three ways: (1) misinterpretation of various conventional objects like balloons, meteors, or birds in flight; (2) a mild form of mass hysteria; (3) pure hoaxes.

More Theories Than "Saucers"

But if the Air Force figured that its official report would put an end to speculation, it was underestimating the public curiosity and imagination. If anything, the theories have multipled. Some represent an elaboration or variation of the Air Force findings, while others have a distinct Buck Rogerish flavor. Here are some of the ones that have been put forth to explain the celestial crockery:

Secret Weapon. The magazine U. S. News and World Report says in its current issue that the disks are aircraft of a revolutionary design—a combination helicopter and fast jet plane. It says well-documented accounts show these planes to be 105 feet in diameter and circular in shape, with what appear to be jet nozzles all around the outer rim. Indications are, according to the magazine, that the "saucers" are being developed by the Navy. This story brought emphatic denials from the President and from Defense Secretary Louis Johnson. Mr. Truman said that if there was any such project in the works, he had not heard about it. Igor Sikorsky, noted aeronautical engineer and a pioneer in helicopter design, commented: "I doubt very much that at the present stage of our knowledge we could combine a helicopter and a jet plane in this fashion."

Could They Be Russian?

Soviet Missiles. Reports of "flying saucers" in Alaska and in Scandinavia gave rise to speculation that the Russians might be experimenting with some strange new rockets. Proponents of this theory recalled that the Nazis were far ahead of us in the development of guided missiles, and that some of their top scientists are now working for Russia. Air Force investigators looked into this prospect, but reported they could find no substantiation.

Weather Balloons. Military authorities believe a good many "saucer" cases are attributable to weather observation balloons and radar target balloons. The United States Weather Bureau and the armed forces have occasion to use various types of these balloons to gather information on atmospheric conditions. The radar balloons dangle a six-cornered target of aluminum foil which frequently catches the sun's rays and could be mistaken for a flying disk.

Planets or Meteors. Among scientists there is a strong suspicion that some of the perplexing sights that have been reported may be traced to meteors flashing across the sky, or to the planet Venus, which is the nearest major planet to the earth. When one of the mysterious disks was spotted in Kentucky, an astronomer was summoned and he identified it positively as the planet, which at that time happened to be partic-

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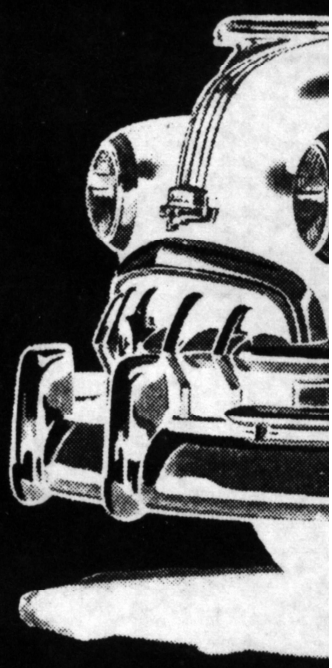

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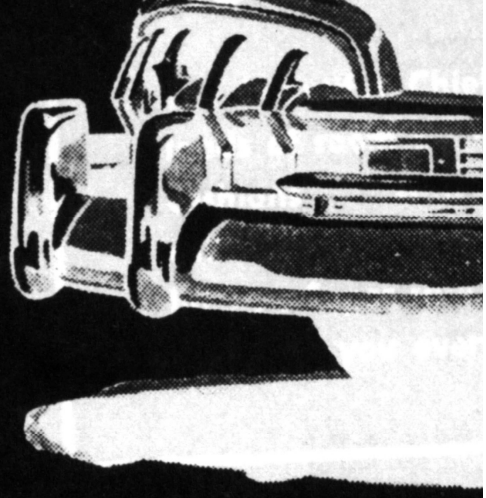
Seeing Things

Optical Illusions. The experts point out that the sun, the stars and the senses are in the habit of playing tricks on us. Prof. C. C. Wylie, University of Iowa astronomer, gives this example: "In driving west in the morning hours, if an airplane crosses the road some distance ahead, the sunlight reflected from its windows may obliterate the outline of the plane, giving the appearance of a round or oval and brilliant spot of light moving in the sky." Some illusions become even more vivid when a person is in an airplane.

Interplanetary Visitors. The "saucers" carry scouts from another planet, intent on learning the ways of the earth. This theory



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THOSE FLYING SAUCERS: ARE OR AREN'T THEY?

Everybody, Including the President, Is Puzzled and Many Guesses Are Made

By JOSEPH NOLAN

The mystery of the "flying saucers" was accorded renewed attention last week, this time even by President Truman himself. The President said he was just as puzzled as the next fellow by the latest flurry of reports about weird and wonderful sights in the sky.

A police chief in Illinois swore he saw a "strange disk-like object, reddish in the center, with blue lights on the outer edges." Residents of an Ohio city reported "two bright lights in the sky," each trailing a streak of orange flame. Other "saucer" stories popped up in such widely scattered points as Turkey, Argentina, Germany, China and Chile.

The reports were reminiscent of the ones that made the rounds back in the summer of 1947. In June of that year, a business man named Kenneth Arnold, piloting his private plane in Washington State, spied nine shimmering disks cruising along in the vicinity of Mount Rainier. He told his story to the newspapers and pretty soon people all over the country were seeing "saucers." Some of them looked like "shiny chromium hub caps off a car." Others resembled "an ice-cream cone topped with red." Still others suggested a teardrop, a doughnut, or a ball of fire.

The Air Force inaugurated "Project Saucer" to investigate and evaluate the reports. Experts at Wright-Patterson Air Force base in Dayton, Ohio, spent two years sifting almost 400 cases. Their conclusion, made public last December, was that all of them could be accounted for in one of three ways: (1) misinterpretation of various conventional objects like balloons, meteors, or birds in flight; (2) a mild form of mass hysteria; (3) pure hoaxes.

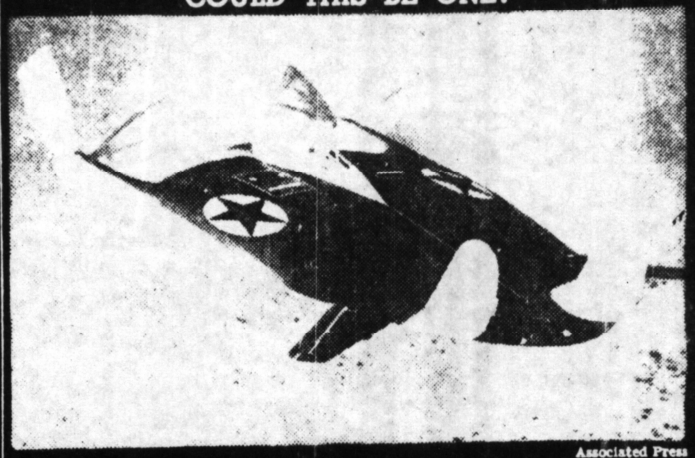
More Theories Than "Saucers"

But if the Air Force figured that its official report would put an end to speculation, it was underestimating the public curiosity and imagination. If anything, the theories have multipled. Some represent an elaboration or variation of the Air Force findings, while was advanced recently by True Magazine. It has a counterpart in stories making the rounds on the West Coast to the effect that one of the disks crashed and that a body was thrown free of the wreckage, the body of a monkey-like creature about three feet tall. The Air Force insists that its investigations "lend no support to the view that the 'saucers' may come from another planet."

Despite the frequency with which the flying disks have turned up, most people have trouble discussing them with a straight face. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko, in a rare moment of whimsy, suggested that perhaps they were caused by a Russian discus thrower who didn't know his own strength.

Speaking as a psychologist, Prof. G. Milton Smith of the College of the City of New York, offered this theory: "The explanation of the saucers is obvious—they originated in Scotland, where the Loch Ness monster caused such a sensation several years ago. The sea serpent, angered by a lack of attention, has been discharging eggs at supersonic velocity by lashing its tail about. These eggs have been floating through the stratosphere and as they descend toward the earth their rotary motion has flattened them into the shape of disks. The glowing effect reported by some observers is undoubtedly due to frictional changes at various altitudes."

COULD THIS BE ONE?



Associated Press

The V-173, experimental fighter the Navy developed during the war.

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